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NIO/NESA

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Talking Points for 1 September MeetingPalestinians in North Lebanon and the Biqa' Valley

1. There are some 10,000 Palestinian fighters in North Lebanon and the northern Biqa' Valley.

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2. Potential scenarios are frankly unpredictable and run the gamut from a decisive Israeli military push to mutual withdrawal to acquiescence in a continued Syrian and PLO presence in the area. One possible chain of events would be the following:

- Both Israelis and Syrians/Palestinians refuse to budge.
- Israelis strengthen their own and the Lebanese Christian's strategic positions by taking the mountain ridgelines and the Christian central Biqa' city of Zahlah.
- Syria and Israel eventually agree to phased withdrawals to the northern and southern ends of the country respectively. Palestinian elements remain in Syrian areas, and this situation is tolerated for the foreseeable future.

3. What makes this kind of non-definitive solution a real possibility is the following:

- Israel's essential interests have been met, and it would seem difficult to garner domestic support for yet another military campaign with concomitant casualties.
- Lebanese forces cannot clear the north for some time to come.
- Dispersal of 10,000 plus Palestinian fighters will not be easy after Beirut, and their remaining in these areas may be as good a solution as any other security-wise.

4. Although our policy is, of course, committed to a unified Lebanon, the emergence of an untidy situation such as the above may well be tolerable to our interests.

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